

"What sort of use is a lawyer, anyway?"



A DOGGED CHASE

By FREDERICK WALWORTH

With drawings by F. R. GRUGER

HENRY WRIGHT is a client of mine and an exceedingly shrewd man. Perhaps if I say that he is a real estate broker in a comparatively small town and quite successful, it will not be necessary to elaborate further. Therefore when he met me on my arrival at the office one morning with the assertion, accompanied with appropriate gestures, that he had been robbed, I was not unduly excited.

My thought was that anybody capable of swindling Mr. Wright would be fairly entitled, on grounds of sheer merit alone, to anything he could get. I didn't say that to Wright though. He wasn't in the mood to appreciate it.

In fact he was very wildly excited and more or less inarticulate, from which latter condition alone I might have inferred that something had really happened. When a real estate man loses his power of language it is a safe bet he's in trouble. For some time he could only iterate and reiterate with lurid variations that he had been robbed, and that

Sam Johnson had robbed him. Johnson is or was a mortgage banker of the place, and having had some dealings with him I felt assured that if any one in town could swindle Mr. Wright it was probably Mr. Johnson. In what follows Wright's remarks have been carefully expurgated, but are otherwise about as he made them.

"How did he rob you?" I finally demanded.

Wright silenced the leaping fox terrier, which had followed him in, before answering.

"Hendricks," he said sadly, "I guess I'm a pretty easy mark. I used to be fair to middling sharp, but I must be getting old. My brains must be worn out. It was this way. Four years ago I had a little bunch of money and I went to this hyena and bought two mortgages, or rather trust deeds, in which he was the trustee, see? Well, they both fell due last year and both of 'em were paid, though I didn't know it till this week. Sam told me both loans had been extended. Then he ex-

ecuted the releases and stuck the cash into his own pocket. It's a neat little game. All you have to do is find some lunatic to hold the bag."

"And you took his word for the extensions without any writing from the mortgagers?" I asked.

"Oh, don't I know how many kinds of a fool I've been!" snapped Wright. "Don't rub it in. He paid the interest regular enough till he got ready to clear out, and I never suspected things weren't all straight. Now he's skipped, and I want to know where I get off at, see?"

"You're sure he executed the releases?"

"Sure as you're a foot high. I went through the records yesterday afternoon."

"Then that lets the property owners out, of course. All you can do is to get after Johnson. He's good, isn't he?"

"Good!" yelled Wright. "Didn't I tell you he's skipped out between days? I don't know where he is. There ain't a thing of his in this town that ain't covered thigh deep with mortgages. Oh, yes, he's good, very! What am I going to do?"

"How much did you lose?" I asked.

"Three thousand. Every red cent I cleaned up out of the Elmwood Addition, every red."

"Well, Wright," I said, "if things are as you say, about all you can do is to say good-by to the three thousand and go out after some more. If we can find Johnson we can send him to the penitentiary, but if there isn't any equity in the real estate he holds here your three thousand is gone."

"No mortal way of getting at the property owners?"

"Certainly not. They paid their loans and got their releases."

Wright swore a large, square-cornered, real estate oath.

"Well," he said resignedly, "that's about how I figured it myself. 'With all thy getting get understanding.' I am getting it, and if I live to be about nine hundred and fifty perhaps I'll get a little horse sense, too. Three thousand won't absolutely break me, but I hate like sin to lose it that way. If I'd laid

it down on a full house and had four deuces shown against me I'd feel better about it. And say, if I ever meet up with Sam Johnson the Lord help him, I won't."

I made a thorough investigation and found that matters stood exactly as Wright had said. He was not the only one caught. Apparently the banker had contemplated a change of climate for some time, and besides several others in the same condition with Wright, it turned out that every foot of property Johnson owned in the place was buried under a load of incumbrances.

As far as Wright was concerned he seemed to be out just three thousand dollars. Johnson had not left a thing we could attach, and to try and find him looked like sending good money after bad, so I told Wright to forget all about it. This he apparently did and for several months I heard nothing about the matter except incidentally.

Then one day in the fall Wright came in with a childlike, innocent, "heathen Chinee" expression which I knew denoted a riotous good humor. He was accompanied by a half-grown Llewellyn setter which fell over his own feet getting up the steps and was ready to yap in pure good nature if one looked at him.

I believe I have not mentioned the fact that Wright's sole hobby is dogs. Personally I like a dog, I think I like two dogs, I might even get along with three, but at that point I should draw a heavy blue line. Wright, however, is rarely without as many as a dozen, and in the spring when the puppies arrive has been known to boast of double that. He makes no specialty of any single breed, his tastes being eclectic in that regard, and he is never seen unaccompanied by at least one healthy specimen.

I have sometimes thought that my client's mood at any given hour might safely be inferred from the particular brand of canine at his heels. It was a care-free setter pup to-day and I knew Wright was happy. After a stern display of authority he induced the animal to charge and stay charged, and then turned to me.

"Say, Hendricks," he began with a

chuckle, "what sort of use is a lawyer, anyway?"

I said nothing, the answer being encyclopædic. Wright kept on chuckling.

"How much are you going to stick me for that Johnson business?" he asked next.

"Well," I replied, "I usually charge you enough to make you think my services are worth something."

"And of course," said Wright, "if your opinion turns out N. G. you don't charge anything?"

"Never knew an instance," I replied brazenly.

"Well, you listen to me then," said Wright, "and when I'm through, if you've got gall enough to send in a bill I'll pay it without a wiggle. First off, take a look at that."

He flung down a New York draft for \$3,109.60.

"What does that look like? Looks like three thousand dollars with interest at seven per cent for six months and odd days, don't it?"

"It might be that," I admitted.

"You just bet it might," chuckled Wright. "And you had the nerve to tell me I couldn't get that out of Sam Johnson! Advised me to forget it and go and make some more. Now, honest, you're a valuable man to have around when a fellow needs advice, ain't you?" He leaned back and laughed through a long six feet.

"Found him, did you?" I said.

"Well, some," replied Wright.

"Tell me about it."

"Well," said Wright, "after you handed down that decision of yours I went out to act on it, like I always do. And I suppose I really forgot that three thousand for as much as twenty minutes maybe. But it did cut me like a buzz-saw to have that little, black, curly-headed heathen eat into me that way. If it had been a bony-fidy, life-size white man I might have looked at it different, sort o' like the fortunes of war maybe, but Sam Johnson stuck half way down. Well, it didn't take me any great while to find out which way he was headed when he lit out, and a little figuring on the rate he was moving and the length of time his wind would last told me

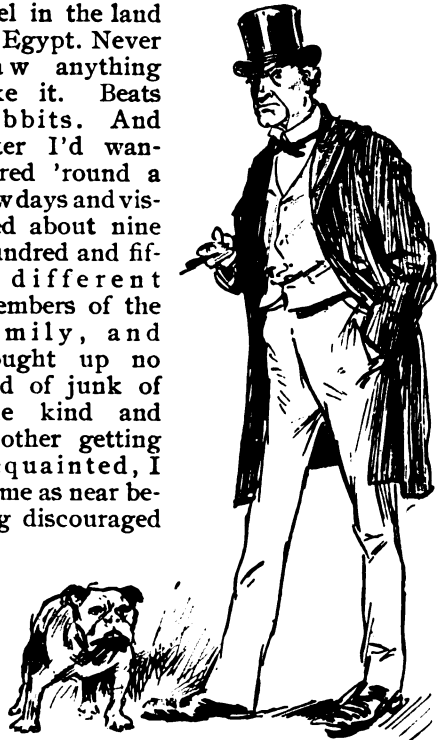
about where he'd fetch up at. So last week when it came time for a vacation I went off on a fishing trip and brought up in Chicago. Fishing's fine out there if you know where to look for it."

"Don't tell me," I interposed, "that you went out to Chicago looking for Johnson with no more of a clue than that."

"Well," said Wright, "perhaps I nosed around a little first maybe. But that don't cut any figure. What I'm proving to you is that your advice wasn't worth a hill o' dead beans. Where'd I been if I'd gone off and forgot that three thousand, eh?"

He rolled his eyes up and chuckled internally for some time. It didn't seem my play, so I preserved an ornamental silence.

"Chicago directory's bang full o' Johnsons," he said presently. "Some old patriarch Johnson must have started out there with a family like Jacob's and it's been growing ever since same as the children of Israel in the land of Egypt. Never saw anything like it. Beats rabbits. And after I'd wandered 'round a few days and visited about nine hundred and fifty different members of the family, and bought up no end of junk of one kind and another getting acquainted, I came as near being discouraged



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as I usually get, which ain't very.

"Likely you've noticed, though, that when your Uncle Henry gets to the last lone kink in his rope something most generally transpires to happen. Anyhow, after the Johnson tribe petered out and I discovered the directory was printed a couple of months before my particular Sam fled from our midst, I'm a sinful man if I didn't walk right plumb into him one day on the sidewalk. That was dumb, blind, bull-headed luck, but you bet it didn't fluster me into letting him get out from under.

"Hello, Sam!" I says, and grabbed his hand. 'You little—' but never mind what I called him. He was sweating ice when I got through. I never let go his hand either. He was twisting 'round trying to break loose, and swearing by seven or eight different gods his name wasn't Sam, but I hung on like he was an aged millionaire uncle of mine. He was shaved clean, but I knew him.

"Come on," I said, 'I've got something to say to you, you little, wall-eyed,—' but never mind that. He didn't make any wild struggle to come and there was a crowd collecting so I scared him good.

"Sam," I says in his ear, 'you see that large blue gentleman with the club over there? Well you just ponder where you'll arrive at if I yell across to him once.' That just naturally turned him from a respectable citizen outraged in his personal rights into a little, scared, ratty beggar, you bet.

"I took his arm with a double twist and marched him to the hotel and every time we passed a policeman I'd jam my elbow in his ribs and he'd sort o' shrivel up a little smaller and a little rattier. I swear, now I think about it, I don't believe there was any curl

left in his hair time I got him locked in with just me alone.

"What you want o' me, Mr. Wright?" he kept squealing, and by George I felt sorry for him."

"Stick to facts, Wright?" I injected.

"Well," said Wright, "maybe not exactly sorry for *him* either, but sort of sorry for his folks to think they had such a—well never mind what.

"Sam," I said, 'I'll tell you what I want o' you.' I figured a minute while he looked out the window to see if there was a fire escape. There wasn't. 'I want three thousand one hundred and nine dollars and sixty cents and I want it quick, see.' Well you ought to've heard him. I bet in the next five minutes if he told me he was dead broke once he told me nine hundred and fifty times.

"Sam," I says when he let up some? 'I'm sorry to hear it. I thought maybe you'd saved up something the last few years. It's pretty tough,' I says, 'when a man gets to be as old as you and has worked hard all his life and still has to hustle for a job. Yes sir,' I says, 'that seems to me tougher'n sole leather. But don't you worry, Sam,' I says sort o' cheerful, 'we'll fix all that. I'm going to put you in a place where you'll have a steady job right along, board and clothing thrown in,' I says. 'Won't be any frills on the food, and the clothes'll be plain but tough as iron. You'll have a room to yourself,' I says, 'and somebody to take care of you all the time. I expect you'll be right comfortable, maybe,' I says.

"He sat up some then.

"What you goin' to do, Mr. Wright?" he says, mighty blue round the gills.

"There's only one thing to do, Sam, in a case like this," I says, sort o' sorrowful. 'Course, knowing you the way I do I hate like taxes to do it,' I



"Swearing by seven different gods his name wasn't Sam."



"It was a mighty solemn time for Sam while he was coercing my conscience."

says, 'but duty is duty and my conscience is my master,' I says. 'It seems too bad when a little matter of three thousand dollars or so comes between friends like us,' I says, 'but, as I remarked, duty is duty, Sam, and when a man's got a conscience like mine he has to follow same as a pup on a chain,' I says.

"Well it didn't take any great while for my meaning to soak through to where Sam Johnson lives at. He sort o' turned from sky blue to lemon yellow. I got a pup up at the house I'm going to name after him. He's a mean little fice, but when another dog comes nosing 'round him he puts up the most horrible bluff you ever saw; shows every tooth and wrinkles up his nose and growls like a double barrelled earthquake. Most generally the other dog decides he hasn't lost anything around that neighborhood and goes off slow and majestic. But once in a while that pup bumps into a real dog that sizes him up and calls his bluff, and honest it's painful the way he turns over on his back and takes what's coming to him.

"That's about what Sam did when it came to a show-down. It hurt him though to give up the goods. He put in some little time begging me not to

prosecute him. Said he knew he'd robbed me but swore when he took it he had to have the money and meant to pay it back.

"Now's a good time, Sam,' I says, when he came to that part.

"'But Mr. Wright,' he says, both hands palms up, 'I ain't got a cent. I'm bankrupt, so help me.'

"Well I guess I let him prove that to me for as much as a half hour maybe. I had an idea while I was escorting him to the hotel that it'd be sort o' fun to watch him squirm. But I don't know. Somehow it grates on you to see a grown man blubber even when you know he's trying to bluff through an ace high hand. So after a while I took out my watch and looked at it and turned the face 'round so he could see it. It was twenty minutes to three.

"'Sam,' I says, 'I'm leaving the city to-night and I've got to take that money with me. We better be going to the bank.'

"Then he began all over again, but I'd had most enough so I called him.

"'All right,' I said and I spoke pretty melancholy and tried to look sorrowful, 'I hate like sin to do it Sam, after all the business we've had together in the past. It hurts me to see a man of your age up against such a bad propo-

sition. But unless I can take that money back to-night I'll have to postpone my departure a few days,' I says, 'and take you along with me. I don't see any other way out though it hurts me to do it. There'll certainly be a warm celebration back there when you arrive. There's quite a bunch o' people'll be glad to see you. I've heard several say if they could only get within reach of you once more they'd die happy.'

"Well I got about so far and then Sam turned over on his back and put all four feet up.

"Come on,' he says, 'Maybe I can raise it.'

"Well then the devil got hold of me and I played him some more.

"Sam,' I said, looking mournful as a bull terrier, 'I don't know as I ought to do it. Come to think about it, seems to me it's my duty to take you back with me maybe. There's all those people back there waiting to see you and all of 'em friends o' mine, and it don't

seem hardly right to disappoint 'em. I guess I'll have to refuse that three thousand,' I says, 'and let you go back with me.'

Wright leaned back in his chair and laughed till the furniture trembled.

"Hendricks," he said at last, "if I should tell you about Sam Johnson down on his knee joints begging me with tears to take that money, you'd think I wasn't stating facts. It was a mighty solemn time for Sam while he was coercing my conscience and right in the middle of it I thought about you and your valuable advice and I tell you I blame near choked to death. But it was getting along towards three so I didn't keep him there long and we went to the bank at a gentle lope.

"He said maybe he could raise it. Raise it! Well some! When he went to the cashier to have him sign that draft he had a smile for Sam that worked both his ears, and from the way he talked to that old pole-cat I'll bet

Sam carried a balance there that would buy my vote. And the cashier didn't call him Johnson either. After we got outside and I had the draft all tucked away safe I gave Sam some real advice, all for nothing too.

"Sam,' I said, 'I leave this town at five-thirty and to-morrow night I'll be back where you ought to be. If anybody should ask me if I saw you my conscience won't permit me to deceive 'em, and I tell you straight there's a lot o' lawyers back there'll race each other 'cross country to be the first to shake hands with you. You better move on and keep moving. I'll give you that much start. If I was mean I'd wire some friends of mine and cut down your lead that much, but I'm not. Now you better travel, see, you little—', but never mind what I called him. He got under way so quick most of it was wasted anyhow."

Wright paused and blew smoke rings at the ceiling.

"I got in at seven last night," he said presently, "and before midnight at least three lawyers



"He had a balance there that would buy my vote."

pulled out of here at somebody else's expense. But I don't think they'll find Samuel. Next time anybody meets him he'll probably be taking fifty cent dollars away from the poor heathen down in Mexico or somewhere. But he won't stay long in any one place. When I let go of him he was a mighty scared little animal and my opinion is that when he stops moving it'll be time for the floral wreaths."

"Wright," I said, not without admiration, "you certainly are to be congratulated. I guess your brains are all right and your luck is like cash in the bank."

"There's just one thing I regret," said Wright. "I ought to have made him pay my expenses out there and back, but I clean forgot it till I was on the train. He'd have begged to pay 'em if I'd only thought of it!"

He threw away his cigar and I

passed him another and a better one.

"You might have included attorney's fees too," I said calmly.

"You're not going to charge me for that advice of yours after what I've told you?" demanded Wright.

"Well Wright," I said, "if my advice hadn't been sound you'd probably be fooling around here yet trying to collect from the property owners. But I won't be hard on you. Leave me the odd dollars and cents and you keep the three thousand and we'll call it square."

Wright rose slowly and chirruped to the Llewellyn.

"Come on Aaron," he said. "We can't afford to stay here. First thing we know this man'll be charging us for the varnish we rub off his chairs. Send in your bill though, Hendricks," he added. "I'd rather owe it to you than cheat you out of it." And he followed the rioting Aaron out.



WAKE ROBIN

By MARY BROWNSON CHURCH

Wake, Robin, wake!
All joyous Nature throbs and thrills
With life, from woods to sunlit hills.
Wake, Robin, wake!

Wake, Robin, wake!
She calls to all her children dear:
"Awake! the sun and Spring are here!"
Wake, Robin, wake!

Wake, Robin, wake!
In answer to her gracious mood
Come all the small folk of the wood.
Wake, Robin, wake!

Wake, Robin, wake!
These are thy friends who long to hear
Thy matin and thy vesper clear.
Wake, robin, wake!

Wake, Robin, wake!
And I am here, their delegate,
To summon thee. Why art thou late?
Wake, Robin, wake!

Wake, Robin, wake!
Who calls "What cheer, dear, dear, what
cheer?"
I must have overslept, for here
Is Robin, wide awake.